THE PACIFIC

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Pac Theo Sem
Reading Room

What We Believe.

"Our Changed Conception of God."

CHARLES SUMNER NASH,
President of Pacific Theological Seminary.

"The Changed View of the Bible."

RAYMOND C. BROOKS,
Pastor of First Congregational Church, Berekeley.

"Christ From the Modern Point of View."

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THE PACIFIC

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A VERY SIGNIFICANT MEETING.

The meeting in Scottish Rite Auditorium, San Francisco, Thursday evening of last week, was one of great significance. About 1400 persons were in attendance; and the addresses, which along with the introductory remarks and opening services required nearly two hours, were listened to with unusual attention. The opening address, of a few words only, given by the Rev. Dr. Aked who presided, and the three addresses as named on the cover page of The Pacific this week, are printed here in full. Thousands of people will wish to read them. Unquestionably they will have much to do in molding the future of religious and theological thought on the Pacific Coast and will work out in good for Congregationalism and the Church Kingdom.

Elsewhere in The Pacific will be found a list of the ministers who were on the platform last Thursday evening. They were there, not believing alike in every particular, but believing in freedom of thought and expression, and in full confidence, from acquaintance with their brethren, that not a thought would be uttered by either the chairman or the speakers, in contravention of any essential Christian truth.

What these three representative Congregationalists believe respectively as to God and the Bible and Christ our readers can now gather for themselves from what is here set forth.

We do not believe that thoughtful, fair-minded people will brand them, or any one of them, as heretical and dangerous, as unworthy general Christian fellowship. And yet there is in these addresses a departure from some of the old beliefs; and some things by some people today held as essential articles of faith are not so held by them.

Richard Watson Gilder once wrote that his brain was wearied and confused, his soul hurt and bruised, by the contentions over religious beliefs; and then—

> "And must I back to darkness go
> Because I cannot say their creed?
> I know not what I think; I know
> Only that Thou art what I need!"

In the last issue of The Outlook Dr. Lyman Abbott had some helpful thoughts on religion, based on the words of Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

But, inasmuch as Dr. Abbott will not be accepted by some people, and the Prophet Micah wrote long before Jesus lived and died and triumphed over death, we quote some words of John Wesley, that great Methodist leader, based on the question of the Master to Peter, "Lovest thou me?"

"Men may die without opinions and yet be carried into Abraham's bosom," said Wesley; "but if we be without love, what will knowledge avail? I will not quarrel with you about opinions. Only see that your heart is right with God. I am sick of opinions. Give me good and substantial religion, a humble, gentle love of God and man."

> "Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

A deliberate attempt is being made now, in and through the daily papers, to weaken the influence of Protestant Christianity in San Francisco and California—as well as the forces working for certain great moral reforms. The Pacific knows more as to this than it is permitted to give out. To this end advantage was taken of a recent pulpit utterance, similarly made by different preachers in various pulpits during recent years, with the hope that individuals and religious organizations would be led on to disastrous disunion. To some extent the attempt is succeeding. It is a time for Congregationalists to stand together. And it is gratifying that they are so standing.

It is to be hoped that people of all denominations will come speedily to realize that no essential Christian truth is endangered, that no doctrine has been assailed which eminent theologians in all the great denominations have not declared non-essential.

Our call, therefore, is to all the churches of all the denominations, Let us stand together to forward that glad day when Christ shall be acknowledged every where as Lord of life.

When in the 15th century the Copernican system of astronomy was coming into acceptance, the excellent and broad-minded Melanchthon protested against it, as unwarranted by the facts and opposed to all religion. But the Copernican system and all essential religious truths stand today.

Let us relegate to the past the inclination to brand as infidel and dangerous the new views of devout men who say that by means of them God and Christ and the Bible are more precious to them than they were under the old views.

On that platform in Scottish Rite Auditorium last Thursday evening there neither stood nor sat any man who would not say with the poet—

"Christ of Judea, look thou in my heart!
Do I not love thee, look to thee, in thee
Alone have faith of all the sons of men?

. . . . . .

Lead me, yea lead me into deeper life,
This suffering, human life wherein thou liv'st
And breathest still, and hold'st thy way divine."

. . . . . .

Lead me, Man Divine,
Where'er thou willest; only that I may find
At the long journey's end thy image there,
And grow more like it. For art not thou
The human shadow of the infinite Love
That made and fills the endless universe!
The very Word of Him, the unseen, unknown
Eternal Good that rules the summer flower
And all the worlds that people starry space!"

DR. AKED'S OPENING ADDRESS.

We are met together as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have come in simple love and loyalty to Him. We are here to speak to you concerning truths very dear to us. We propose to speak of them in the language of our own day; not in language grown archaic, but in the terms of modern knowledge. We do not pretend that this knowledge is final. We know that the knowledge of to-day needs to be enlarged by the knowledge of to-morrow. But such as it is, it is our own. It has not been certified to us by any ancient council nor is it guaranteed by any modern denomination. It is our own! We have found these truths good and useful in our own experience. We do not believe that they can do harm to any of God's children anywhere We did not wait for some person's authority before we accepted them, and we shall not wait for some person's permission before we preach them. Neither have we waited until this late hour to distinguish between theology and religion. Theology is one thing, religion is another. Theology is an account of God and of His relations with man in the terms of the best knowledge available at the present time. There is, therefore, always a new theology. Astronomy is a systematised account of the stars according to the knowledge now possessed, and geology of the earth, and botany of the world of plants and flowers. With every fresh tap of the hammer there may be a new geology, a new astronomy with every fresh lens added to the telescope, a new botany with every new slide placed under the microscope, and a new theology with every new fact brought to light or fresh truth revealed by any one of all the sciences. Some new theory about the Milky Way will not hurl the planets from their places! The stars will have still the same bright look that in Eden's youth they wore; and the sun will keep on shining. No new theology affects the truths of God and Christ and Immortality. Religion is the life of God in the soul of man. The God who was our help in ages past is our hope for years to come. He who was the strength of our heroic sires will not loose his hold upon their not less faithful sons. And Jesus Christ remains! Believe in men and they may fail you. Believe in men's creeds and they may crumble at your touch. Rest your faith in the Christ of God and He will fail you never. He is our faith—not Luther, nor Calvin, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor any man however holy, nor any creed that man has made, but once and for all time and for all eternity Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

OUR CHANGED CONCEPTION OF GOD.

C. S. Nash, President of Pacific Theological Seminary.

We are speaking tonight,—I may say for my brethren—we are speaking tonight as individual Christians who testify what they believe to be the truth. We assume to speak for no others, though confident that large numbers of thoughtful Christian people believe as we believe. We have no right to be called spokesmen for our branch of the Church, a denomination devoted to freedom and declining all authoritative formulation of doctrine. We believe in wide latitude in interpreting the main truths which we agree in holding. We can say no more tonight than this, that we know that many of our Congregational ministers and members hold in the main the positions which we are taking, and that their ranks are increasing; we also know that we are in line with large and enlarging numbers in other evangelical denominations.

We are here tonight in no spirit of controversy or conceit. We would say no word that would sting or hurt those who may differ with us. We would not disparage the past. We are children of our fathers. They have lifted us to our high estate. If we stand upon their shoulders, it is what they desired and trained us to do. We should be sadly false to them if we had failed to make the advance for which they prepared and charged us.

We are, moreover, the children of those who counted religion the supreme interest and duty of life. If they expected the new day to be fuller of light—and they certainly did expect it—it was the light of God upon the human spirit that they meant. It is our duty to them as well as to God, in grateful memory of all they knew and taught us, to live and learn beyond them. We have reverenced and obeyed them by going forward. In this generation mankind has made bewildering strides and is still marching on in seven-league boots. No department of human thought and life is at a standstill. And in the universal process, wheresoever religion has ignorantly or timidly or stubbornly halted in its tracks, there it has lost its opportunity and declined its duty. As a general truth, it has not halted nor held back. Religion is a conserving and steadying force in human life. In these marvelous new days, when men are so intoxicated with the wine of life, religion should not lose its poise. Advance it must make, afraid of nothing, appropriating and interpreting all truth, adapting itself to all conditions, maintaining its control of human thought and action. It must think and speak in the language of the day, or men will cease to understand and then will cease to listen. And these days in which we live are so rapid that religion finds it hard to keep its eternal values intelligible to swiftly changing thought and applied to human need. But its effort to advance without loss and hurt is far more valiant and successful than many suppose. Religious truth is roomy and spacious; there are cosy corners for those who are content with what they have, and far horizons for those who are off and away, eager and not content, Long advance in religious thought and experience has been made in the last seventy-five years. It should not be counted strange. The greatest changes that have ever occurred in human thought and knowledge and in their application to living conditions have come since 1850. And the men who

have been thinking out religious truth and applying it to life are the same men who have lived through the wondrous changes in science and philosophy and education and economics and morals and social service. And men must unify their thinking; not long can they keep religion in a radically different compartment. All truth is one, and religion must be at home everywhere.

God is the final reality; beyond Him human thought cannot go; short of Him it cannot rest. Thought about God is thought in its farthest reach. Experience of God is the deepest need and desire of man; consciousness of it his joy and strength, his transforming power. It follows that a change in our conception of God can be nothing less than a profoundest and most vital change. Such a change has passed and is passing over our Christian thought, surpassing all the more superficial, yet astounding changes of our time. This change may be characterized as follows.

In methods it is an exchange of the intellectual for the experiential, of elaborate interpretation for simple statement of fact and reality. Greek philosophy "took a simple faith and left an elaborate system of belief. It added to the bulk of doctrine, but not to its vitality or working vigor." Metaphysical inquiry and discussion took the place of the experience of the heart. The way unto God and the life in God became too largely intellectual assent to manifold doctrine. Elaborate interpretations were substituted for the heart of the truth. Then these elaborations were fixed into formal and authoritative creeds. "The Church went on to build the doctrine into a scholastic system. The system has grown, until the head of the organization stands as the infallible teacher."

Christian truth has come down to us thus elaborated and formalized. But men have always been thinking for themselves and no official creed has been final. The cry of the heart for truth and power could not be stifled, and the search has been continuous for the real and simple truth beneath the burdensome and powerless forms. The real truth has remained, however overlaid. And today more than ever men insist upon finding it and rejoicing in it as the essential thing. It has recently been said, "The permanent element in the doctrine (any doctrine) is the declaration of the great experimental truths; the changing and passing element consists in the various interpretations of those truths, made from time to time in human thought. We need to be called back to the realities, where the power dwells." ("What Shall We Think of Christianity?" p. 92) As fast, brethren, as we recognize this difference between the central reality and the various interpretations, between essentials and non-essentials, we shall cease to strive over interpretations and shall welcome one another "back to the realities, where the power dwells."

It is true at this moment that men are tired of insistent discussions of non-essentials and are seeking a vital experience of the simple heart of truth. They are seeking God less by the hard labor of the mind than through moral sympathy, through the trust and love of the heart. We are inquiring after God, not of philosophy, but of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Brother. We are listening to His words, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God;" and "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Beholding God in and through Jesus Christ, we are surer than ever that we have found Him to be a person. In the Man of Nazareth was a fulness of life whose measure we cannot take. Before His clear and guileless consciousness of communion with the personal God we stand in awe. The religion which He taught is nothing else than such communion. The life into which He restores men is the same experience of personal communion with God. For nearly two millenniums Christians have been repeating the mysterious experience of divine fellowship, of exchanging thought and feeling with an infinite Friend. We have not lost His personality in His infinity. In Him all the elements of true personality are raised to perfection. Lacking all incompleteness and limitation, He is the self-existent, self-conscious and self-directing Person. We may or may not think Him out in philosophical terms, or present Him in a creed. The vital thing is that we find and recognize Him and share the fulness of His life.

Though we never can compass His being, we have a wealth of vital experience too wonderful to be suppressed. Hence the historic doctrine of the Trinity. This was not an effort of sheer metaphysics; it was a loving attempt to formulate an experience of the personal God too complex for simple definition. The doctrine of the Trinity has persisted and will persist. The permanent element in it is "the declaration of the great experimental truths"; the voluminous, labored interpretations are good for those who find them helpful. Believing souls recognized in Jesus "the fulness of the Godhead bodily", God incarnate, God manifest in humanity. Through Him they apprehended God Himself, whom Jesus called Father, the final reality, the self-existent One, who so loved as to reveal Himself to redeem His children. Through Christ, again, they became aware of God dwelling in their hearts in a ministry of power, and they called him the Holy Spirit. These three seemed all so real and so divine as often to be held separate and equal while yet they blended into the single conception of the infinite God. It has been difficult to keep the unity of God. There are three persons in one God, said the ancient thinkers. Popular faith and worship have often three gods, losing the unity in showing full reverence to each. Modern thought is now clearing and establishing the unity. The three are persons only in an ancient sense, not in the modern meaning of separate personalities. The one God holds all the relations there are with His created universe. In every experience it is God Himself we meet, not some representative of God. 'The universe is one", says a recent writer, and God is one. One God, one mind, one will—this is the only form in which any belief in God whatever is possible in the world as we know it now. . . . God Himself is the Father, God Himself is the divine in Jesus Christ, and God Himself is the Holy Spirit.' (Clarke's Christian Doctrine of God, p. 237, 246) The same writer may well add, and we adopt his words, "There is not less divine indwelling than the ancient doctrine affirmed, but more, but it is the indwelling of God. 'I will dwell in them' (2 Cor. 6:16) is a true word without diminution" (p. 246). We shall keep the terms and figures of the ancient doctrine of the Trinity. Our interpretations will differ, but that is not essential. Some will reduce the terms to mere modes of three-fold manifestation of the one God. Others will hold the doctrine in a different sphere, as the worthiest effort to express the limitless wealth of our experience of the infinite God. Beneath all varieties of interpretation we dwell together as brethren in the one God, our Father.

Another change which has passed over our religious thinking is a change from legal, formal and institutional to personal conceptions. We used to think of God as monarch, wielding the sceptre and jealous for His throne. We thought of Him as King over a kingdom of sheer power, triumphing over enemies, reducing all creatures to subjection, ruling in majesty and might. We thought of Him

as Judge dispensing severe justice over creatures of wrath, condemning and punishing, inflicting endless and hopeless penalties, as the only way to sustain His omnipotent government. We are learning at last, really learning and understanding, that God is our Father, and that we are not subjugated enemies nor condemned culprits, but children beloved and cherished. Our Father is indeed Lord of all, clothed with infinite majesty. To His lordship we must forever answer. But as we find God in Christ the greatest truth regained—most true of Him and us, supreme over all other truths, determining all His relations with us—is His Fatherhood and our sonship. This truth is now radiant and surpassing. The filial relation is chief of all. "Our Father" is the address to be forever on our lips. By that must all truth and duty be tested and explained. Our days must be those of growing children responsive to our Father's love, unfolding in His light, approaching His moral perfection, working with Him and one another. The extent and significance of this change from the institutional to the personal, we may be slow to appreciate; but no sooner do we catch its first meanings than we know ourselves delivered into the "liberty of the glory of the children of God."

What is the character of God, our Father? is the deepest question of the ages. Our reply now is this:—God is what Jesus of Nazareth said He was, what Jesus Himself was. He is like Christ. There is nothing higher to be said. Our thought cannot reach beyond the perfect character and divine consciousness of Jesus. Seeing the Father in Him "sufficeth us" How profound and complete it is, yet how simple! It is not metaphysical analysis, it is spiritual vision. It finds the inmost truth about the divine nature, because it finds God Himself. God is in Christ, and he who accepts Christ by faith receives God and knows Him by the kinship of moral life and the answer of love. Much remains to learn of God, but there is no different God to replace Him whom we have found in and through Jesus. We have begun to live in the Living One. Thus have Christians always found God through Christ the way, but have been confused and burdened by the elaborate creeds enforced by faulty leaders who could not believe that it was enough to see God in Christ. The return to this simplicity of faith and vision is a modern renewal of life at its very source.

Learning of Jesus Christ, our modern emphasis is now resting upon God's moral perfection and His love. God is a holy being, and God is love, we are chiefly saying. Those are the truths we most need to know of Him. Those are the most radiant and mighty qualities in Jesus. Those are the truths bearing most commandingly upon our duty and most blessedly upon our welfare. His truth, His wisdom, His justice, His power,—all His attributes we revere. "But the central element in the doctrine of God is the moral and religious. Not the divine power, but the divine character is at the front. Not the philosophy of His nature, but the love and righteousness of God is the primary fact in the doctrine." (Clarke's Christian Doctrine of God. p. 53) There is an extraordinary moral reaction abroad at the present time. Men feel the call to rectitude and perfection. Salvation is seen to be a moral process, however miraculously it may begin in renewal and conversion. It is deeply felt that God will have nothing less from men than the pursuit and attainment of holy character. Christian living is not so much membership in the church or ceremonies of worship as it is likeness to Christ in character and service. The sincere soul acknowledges that all his actions must be clean and right out of a character whose spirit and substance are holy as God is holy. Never an age so complex and confused; nor ever an age when men of sincere and intelligent purpose bowed so surely to the moral imperative. We **must** work out our own salvation till we are perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. The victory of holy character must be won.

It can be won, for love is supreme. Not alone by resident human forces must our salvation be worked out, for God worketh His own will in us. The truest and greatest word about the nature of God is that He is love. Whatever else our Father is, love is His inmost being, His all-pervading quality. However He may appear to act toward His children at any time, His love is always perfect and supreme. Else were He not our Father. Love is not mere good nature, that men should do all manner of evil with impunity. But the Father's love is mightier than the waywardness, the resistance, the weakness and the guilt of His wilful children. He will help them through, by whatever devious and painful ways, unto perfection and filial love, if they are willing; nay more, His love will prevail to make them willing and bring them home. Shall sovereign and exhaustless love fail?

So stands men's hope today, believing that infinite love will make the victory of holy character complete and universal, and that "good shall fall at last, far off, at last to all."

Another far-reaching change in our conception has been that which is represented in the modern doctrine of the immanence of God. His transcendence has always been a great article of our faith. It means that God is greater than all that He has created and independent of it. It was often held to mean that God was absent from the world—an "absentee God." He had set the world running by resident forces. Its regular processes went on without His immediate action. Occasionally He broke in by what is called a miracle, but for the most part He remained aloof, He governed from without.

We have always had, it is true, the precious truth of the divine omnipresence. We have believed God present everywhere. He could act instantly at any point or at all points. Men could reach Him with their praise and prayer, and were the objects of His unfailing care. Thus have we brought near the infinite and transcendent God. We have rejoiced in the rich Scriptures which set forth His presence with men, His providence, His spiritual indwelling, His immediate transforming influence— in a word, His communion with His children.

In this truth of the divine presence we have reality and complete vital values. We might use the term omnipresence for the recent great expansion of our thought and faith. We have, however, taken the term **immanence** instead. We have made a new discovery of God's vital relation to His universe. We have caught new meanings in the old truth that the transcendent God, who surpasses all, dwells in all. We have discerned that His real presence everywhere is a continuously creative presence. The processes of life do really work by resident forces, but those forces are not merely set in motion by the creator, they are the continual action of the indwelling Spirit. He creates and sustains and governs, not from without, but from within. Modern philosophic thought has reached this

revelation, and Christian thought finds its Scriptures rising to the height of the great argument. The late Professor Bowne has put it in this way: "In the new conception the supernatural is nothing foreign to nature and making occasional raids into nature in order to reveal itself; but, so far as nature is concerned the supernatural is the ever present ground and administrator of nature; and nature is simply the form under which the Supreme Reason and Will manifest themselves. This is the doctrine of the divine immanence to which philosophy is coming in its search after the cosmic causality. We come down—to a Living Will which worketh hitherto and worketh evermore . . . The commonest event, say the fall of a leaf, is as supernatural in its causation as any miracle would be; for in both alike God would be equally implicated" (p. 17). 'The instructed theist, then," he adds, "sets aside the self-running nature and the absentee God. . . . For him God is the ever present agent in the on-going of the world, and nature is but the form and product of His ceaseless activity" (p. 24). The same writer says again: "The presence of God in nature does not mean that God is here and there in the world performing miracles, but that the whole cosmic movement depends constantly upon the divine will and is an expression of the divine purpose. In like manner the presence of God in history does not mean exclusively, or mainly, that God is working signs and wonders upon occasion, but rather that God is carrying on the great historical movement and working His will therein" (p. 43).

This is the Christian view of the relations of God to His universe. "Of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things." In the divine Son "all things hold together." "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Not a sparrow "shall fall on the ground without your Father," and "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." "The God that made the world, and all things therein, giveth to all life and breath and all things; He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." The whole spirit and drift of the Scriptures carries this truth of the most intimate indwelling and creative contact of God in nature and in man. It cannot be overstated. God is forever uttering and imparting Himself. His love is incessantly outpoured. His children may be "filled unto all the fulness of God."

In this truth of the immanent God an immense change has passed over our religious thinking and our Christian living. Two or three implications call for special mention. In the first place, the orderly processes of nature and human nature have taken the evidential place formerly held by miracles. We need not disbelieve in miracles. God is still omnipotent, able to operate in startling ways if need be, to bring in a higher law to check the operation of a lower—for that is what miracles are now seen to mean. But the "isolated wonder" is no longer necessary to manifest God's presence and display His power. Every living blade of grass is proof of His inworking energy; so is "each glad, obedient planet" that "sings through the web that time is weaving"; so is the marvelous pageant of the seasons, the birth of children, the love of mothers, the awakening of Helen Keller through the infinite ministry of love; so is every open eye and vocal tongue and every vital breath. Evolution is still a fearsome word to many devout souls, but it has revolutionized our thinking. Its truth does not banish God, but intensifies the light and power of His presence. It is but a study in the methods of God's operation in nature and man.

"A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod;
Some call it evolution
And others call it God."

It is evolution and it is God. The whole ageless process is the creative work of the Eternal, who, moment by moment, everywhere, worketh hitherto and forevermore.

Then the words natural and supernatural may be cleared of confusion. You cannot draw a distinct line through God's creation and call the lower part natural and the higher part supernatural. The only place to draw the line is between the whole created universe on the one hand and God on the other. The created universe is the natural and God is the supernatural. Nor are these anywhere separate, the one from the other. They dwell together, each in the other, in an intimacy deep beyond our comprehension.

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God."

Nor do the words sacred and profane or secular express valid distinctions. Nothing in the natural order is unhallowed, for all is filled with God and is the expression of His life. Doubtless we erring children profane the sacred works of our Father, debasing even our own spirits which are the highest of God's creations. Doubtless, too, it is necessary for us to set apart some things to moral and religious uses —days of rest and worship, a Lenten season, churches, cathedrals, abbeys, rituals, a peace palace, homes, hospitals, God's acre. But we need to hold all things as of God and sacred, save as touched by moral evil.

There are certain special workings of these changed emphases and modern conceptions which marvelously enrich our religious experience. We are becoming familiar with the divine order of life and serenely confident of our secure place therein. "Not chiefly in flashes of God, but in a steady world, is the divine reality revealed." We learn to rest with settled confidence in the steady world filled with the faithful God. There grows within us the sensitive realization of that inner Presence. Every blossom is opened literally by His hand. Every tree stands in His strength. Every bird sings in the Father's joy. On the hills or by the sea, we walk in His mystic presence, where "In His temple everything saith, 'Glory'!"

We rise, then, to the higher levels of the truth. Chiefly does God dwell in the spiritual order of which all intelligent beings are a part. In Him we have our being. In higher and richer volume than in a tree does God, who is a spirit, dwell in His children. Our being is of the same kind as God's being, since we are His offspring. We used to believe—just yesterday—that human nature and divine nature were essentially unlike and could not interpenetrate save in the one Person, Christ Jesus, in some miraculous union. We are now convinced that the Father and His

children are alike. There are not two diverse kinds of spirit. The human is capable of receiving and expressing the divine. In the one matchless Person the expression was unhindered and perfect. But all communion with God is an incarnation, and all true living is, so far as it goes, a manifestation of the incarnate God. The intimacy of an obedient and visional soul with the indwelling spirit of God is too profound and pervasive to be realized perfectly. We strain our speech to utter it.

"Closer is He than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet."

"He is not so far away as even to be near." Jesus prayed "Even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us." In this mystery shall we not somewhat amend the language of our spiritual experience? God does not come; He is with us. He does not withdraw, else we should instantly die. We do not go here or there to find Him. We do not leave Him when we depart. Prayer should not be an agony of pleading to move a reluctant God; rather, the trustful inquiry of a child after the Father's will, and a serene infilling with the Father's power. Doing the will of God is no grudging obedience to arbitrary commands, no mere fulfillment of written orders. The will of God is His infinite energy working in perfect love toward His perfect ends. And doing His will is accepting our Father's purposes and throwing all our kindled force into the onward sweep of His power. Living thus in Him and He in us, why not with a sound mind in a sound body, with abundant energy and contagious love? Surely so, in so far as we can take the vital currents of the indwelling God. Such living is "under the aspect of eternity." It makes "our noisy years seem moments in the being of the eternal silence." It believes that sovereign love cannot be defeated. The holy city of God can be brought down out of heaven and built all glorious with redeemed humanity here on earth. The materials for it are here, in the divine nature of God's children pervaded with the Father's redeeming presence, in the awakening of the children to their heavenly inheritance and the victorious power within and among them. Here, too, is founded our hope of personal and social immortality. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory." Children created in the image of God, redeemed by His incarnate love, sustained by His inflowing and abiding presence, have no other destiny than their Father's home. The world today believes, as it never knew enough to believe before, the Father's word through Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you, . . . and will receive you unto Myself."

The changed conception of God has brought a fulness of life unknown to any preceding age. "The tabernacle of God is with men. . . and God Himself is with them . . . And He that sitteth on the throne saith, Behold, I make all things new."

"Out of the shadow of the night
The world rolls into light;
It is daybreak everywhere."

If you would be well spoken of learn to speak well of others. And, when you have learned to speak well of them, endeavor likewise to do well to them; and thus you will reap the fruit of being well spoken of by them.—Epictetus.

THE CHANGED VIEW OF THE BIBLE.

Raymond C. Brooks, Pastor of First Congregational Church, Berkeley.

Ladies and Gentlemen—Fellow Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ: In what I am about to say I shall take it for granted that all of us are agreed in recognizing the Bible as above and beyond all other books in its power to refine the heart and culture the mind and build the character through which the kingdom of God is at length to be established in the world. Without regard to theories concerning its inspiration or its composition or its authority, there will be sincere and satisfactory unanimity in recognizing it as the inspiration of all that is purest in our literature, noblest in our art, most heroic in life and most ennobling in its influence on the mind of man. About this there is no need of argument, but I shall ask you to remember throughout the address that we are agreed in regarding this as the most remarkable book in the world, the book most full of the spirit of the living God and most helpful to man.

I shall take it for granted also that all of you are aware that one of the most important and vigorous discussions in the history of human thought has centered about this book for more than a generation. We are now far enough along in the discussion to have reached certain conclusions upon which it is safe to say all the careful Bible scholars in the world, radical and conservative alike, are agreed. But these conclusions constitute a view of the Bible so different from that which prevailed for centuries that many people not knowing what has led to the change and not yet recognizing the immeasurable gains which have come to us from this changed view of the Bible are confused and distressed while those who know why the change has come and know what is involved in it are rejoicing as those who have found some new treasure.

I would not have been willing to enter upon this discussion tonight did I not believe with all my heart and soul that this changed view of the Bible is not only inevitable but is **necessary for the vitality of our faith in the religion of Jesus**, and did I not know from my own experience and from acquaintance with many of similar experience that the changed view of the Bible of which I am to speak to you is of immeasurable gain.

I speak of that which I know and testify of that which I have seen, and I earnestly hope I may be able to make it clear to you that one of the deepest and saddest heresies of our time is the heresy of those who in the face of a multitude of facts and in contradiction to the spirit of Him whose name we bear yet hold to a view of the Bible which has wrought moral and spiritual havoc in the lives of multitudes of people, and which has estranged thousands of the brightest of the young men and women of the land from the church of Christ, and which on the scale of history has brought spiritual death to the church of Christ.

What now has brought about this changed view and how does it differ from the old view and what are the gains which have come to us through it? These are the questions for our thought just now.

The difference between the modern point of view in religion, as it is called, and that which has prevailed for many centuries is to be understood not by comparing the details of any doctrine but by recognizing a difference in

the way in which we reach the understanding of the great facts of religious experience. Our fathers with perfect sincerity assumed certain things to be true. From these assumptions, these dogmas, they reasoned to other things which must therefore be true. For example, they assumed that we need and therefore must have a Bible free from all possible errors, by which we may be guided infallibly to the knowledge of all that we need to know. We have come to believe that the best way in which to reach conclusions which can be justified is to sit down patiently in the presence of facts and try to find out what they mean. We think it wise to base our judgments not upon our preconceptions, not even upon what others have said at an earlier time, but upon as complete a knowledge of the facts as it is possible to gain. That is to say we have come to believe that we are living in a reasonable universe, that the mind of man is made to know the truth of God, that Jesus meant exactly what He said when He said, "The spirit of truth will guide you"; and that if we will be willing patiently, persistently, lovingly to consider the meaning of the facts which it is possible for us to know we will reach at length some conclusions upon which we can safely build. We have come to believe that we need not so much an infallible book to determine for us in advance of our own thinking what we shall believe, but the spirit of truth and of grace. The changed view of the Bible about which I am to speak has come from this perfectly simple method applied to the study of the Bible and to the facts of religous experience, and from nothing else. I am perfectly sure no one can doubt the wisdom of the method. No one of us and no one of those whose conclusions differ from ours would be willing to reach and hold conclusions which are determined by prejudice or by passion or by tradition. Every one of us wants to be sure that the facts in the case are back of his convictions.

What now is the difference in the view of the Bible to which these different methods have led? What was the old conception? In 1861 Dean Burgon in Oxford said: "The Bible is the very utterance of the Eternal. It is as much God's own word as if the heavens had opened and we had heard God speaking to us with human voice. Every book is inspired alike and is inspired entirely." That was the conception in England. That certainly is plain speech. No one could possibly misunderstand that. And remember, though it may seem to you irreverent, almost blasphemous, for any man to say such a thing, it was said with sincerity and in the spirit of reverence.

About the same time Dr. Hodge of the Theological Seminary of Princeton said: "The books of the Bible are one and all in thought and verbal expression wholly the word of God, conveying with absolute accuracy all that God intended to convey. Infallibility and authority attach as much to the verbal expression in which the revelation is made as to the matter of the revelation itself." Or let me quote once more, this time from another honored theologian who was for many years the President of Princeton University, President Francis L. Patton. In a little volume published in 1869 he writes: "The books of the Bible were composed by men who acted under the influence of the Holy Ghost to such an extent that they were preserved from every error of **fact**, of **doctrine**, and of **Judgment**; and were so influenced in their choice of language that the words they used were **the words of God.**" This, then, was the old conception of the Bible—a book miraculously preserved from all errors of fact, of doctrine and of judgment; a book absolutely free from all possible mistakes in all the matters about which it speaks, so that it may truthfully be said to be the very word of God Himself. All that the Catholics had claimed for the infallible church our fathers claimed for the infallible book. For nearly three hundred years this doctrine of infallibility was accepted without question in the church and without proof. Then the spirit that raised the Protestant Reformation raised the question as to the infallibility of the book and asked for proof. The question was raised partly because the church was finding itself greatly embarrassed by this old conception. So long as the Bible was looked upon as the very utterance of God it became necessarily the enemy of science. I have upon the shelves of my study two large volumes, written by one of our university presidents, entitled, "The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology." In them he has told the long, sad story of the conflict between the leaders of the Christian church and the leaders of scientific thought. He has shown how priests and preachers have resisted the discoveries of science, in biology and medicine, in astronomy and anatomy, in geography and geology, in chemistry and physics. Everywhere the same sad story: disciples of Jesus with the Bible in their hands seeking to block the progress of scientific investigation by quoting proof texts. If the Bible said that the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars were created in 144 hours, then it was impious to read the record of the rocks. The Bible settled that matter whatever the facts revealed in the rocks might be. If the Bible spoke of the sun going down and rising again, then it was heresy to say that the earth revolved about the sun, and the man who would say such a thing must be denounced as a heretic. Calvin thought it sufficient to set aside the Copernican theory of astronomy by quoting the passage, "The foundations of the earth are established—they cannot be moved." It is one of the saddest commentaries upon the attitude of the Christian church that almost every man who was doing anything new and significant for his fellowmen was denounced as "infidel," "atheist," "heretic," by those who quoted proof texts against him, a type of warfare which has not yet been entirely forgotten.

But the difficulty of the church with this doctrine became even more serious in the field of morals. Hideous superstitions and intolerable cruelties were defended and kept alive because of this conception. There has scarcely been an evil in human history but that it has been defended by quoting proof texts. Polygamy was justified because Abraham and David were polygamists. Witch-burning was defended because a law two thousand years ago said, "Suffer not a witch to live." Therefore many feeble and deranged women were burned and drowned. Because it was said in one of the epistles that a believer was not to eat with an heretical teacher Calvin spurred the commonwealth of Geneva to burn Servetus. Justified by an appeal to the bloodthirsty psalms and by the word of Jesus spoken in a parable, "Compel them to come in," Torquemada tortured and burned ten thousand heretics in Spain. Because of a blind literalism the Bible itself was used to justify and enforce the most outrageous cruelty and the most inde-

fensible iniquity. In serious difficulty because of a conception which was intended to honor the Scriptures, thoughtful and honest disciples of Jesus began to ask for justification of so strange a doctrine, only to find to their great relief that there was no justification for it.

Open your Bible with this question in mind, "What are the facts and what will they lead us to believe?" What do you find? You will find in the first place that no writer in the Bible ever thinks of claiming for himself that he has been so guided that he is free from the chance of making mistakes, nor does any writer ever think of claiming such direction for anybody else. The Bible never says it is infallible. How could it? It is a collection of books, a library gathered from many different ages and written by many different people, and no writer supposed at the time of writing that his book would sometime be gathered into what we call "The Bible." There is, as you might expect, a great variety of spiritual intensity and worth about these different books, varying all the way from the most ordinary writing to the loftiest utterances in the realm of the spirit, from books we scarcely ever read, like Esther or Leviticus or Judges or Numbers; or even in the New Testament, a book like Jude, to the sublime conceptions of Isaiah, who helps us to see the spiritual splendor that fills the world with glory, or the letters of Paul, the majestic sweep of whose thought helps us to believe that all things, even theological misunderstandings, work together for good to them that love God; or above and beyond all the rest, the Gospels which help us to know Him through whom men have learned to worship and love and trust the God who is the Father of us all.

But not only does the Bible not claim infallibility for itself, but any one with an English Bible in his hands can easily discover that such a claim is contrary to the facts which the Bible itself presents to a careful reader. The Bible itself is the best answer to such a claim. Have you not known that two evangelists report the Sermon on the Mount and that the two reports differ widely. They cannot both be exact. It is scarcely probable that either one undertook to report the precise words of Jesus, but the spirit of the Master no one can fail to catch from either report. "The letter killeth. The spirit maketh alive." There is a similar difference in reporting the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, in reporting the words written over Him upon the cross, in reporting the facts of the resurrection. In the Old Testament, also, there are frequent divergences between narratives reporting the same event; as when the writer of the book of Samuel declares that Jehovah led David to take a census which was taken, as the writer of the book of Chronicles believed, at the prompting of Satan. Any man with his English Bible in his hands can find a multitude of facts which ought to make it perfectly clear that this claim for an infallible Bible is not supported by the facts.

Now there are three possible ways of dealing with such a discovery. One is to deny the existence of any errors and to keep on denying in the face of undoubted evidence. Apart from the fact that this is plainly dishonest, it is the way that leads to confusion, distress, infidelity. We Christians are supposed to be lovers of the truth, followers of Him who said, "The Spirit of Truth will guide you." The man who refuses to look at the evidence or who continues to refuse to give to it its legitimate value has in him the heart of a coward, not of a Christian. A second way is to admit the errors and to jump to the conclusion that the Bible is untrustworthy. You may blind your eyes to its significance and beauty and fasten only upon the mistakes you are able to find if you choose, but to do so is neither a credit to a man's intelligence or to his common sense. A buzzard takes no notice of the sunlight, of the cultivated fields. It looks only for carrion. But the buzzard does not on that account stand high among the birds. A third course is to recognize the facts and try to find out what they mean. This would seem to be the only possible course for a disciple of Jesus to take. It was then the spirit of the Protestant Reformation itself which raised the discussion which has made it clear that the old conception of an infallible Bible is entirely without foundation.

What, then, gave rise to the theory and why did it last so long? Our fathers thought we had need of an infallible book and therefore must have one. Rome appealed to an infallible church. Our fathers felt themselves at a disadvantage in controversy with Rome unless they, too, could appeal to an infallible authority. They did not recognize that we need not an infallible someone or somewhat to do our thinking for us, but a teachable mind, and a reverent spirit. As God has given us our eyes with which to see, so He has given us our minds with which to think—and there is permanent use for our commonsense. What is the history of this doctrine of infallibility? We took it over from Rome, and Rome borrowed it from Judaism. It had its birth in the days following the return from the captivity, when for 400 years before the birth of Christ the voice of the prophet was not heard in the land. Then they began to prize the word of the prophets who had spoken in other days until it seemed to them that through these men God himself had been speaking to men. At length they imagined that the prophets had spoken and written at the dictation of God. The Phariseeism of the time of Jesus was the direct and inevitable outcome of this theory of infallibility. Against this conception Jesus lifted his earnest protest as when He said, "Ye strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." In the second and third centuries, when under strange conditions the religion of Jesus found itself facing all manner of difficulty, the old doctrine of infallibility was revived. It seemed the easiest and simplest way to settle disputed questions. But it did not settle anything except that the church was to be kept in ignorance, was to be the enemy of progress and was to suffer moral decay and spiritual death. The darkness of the Middle Ages can be traced straight to the influence of this doctrine of infallibility because of which the minds of men were closed, and sealed.

Before the first generation of the Reformation had passed once more in the presence of controversy the doctrine of infallibility was renewed and Protestantism, forgetting the great principle which gave it birth, began to appeal to an infallible Book. With what result? These two direct and costly results: Protestantism was broken into fragments by a blind and foolish literalism, and by the end of the 18th century there had come within Protestantism

a spiritual death which filled the devoted followers of Jesus with alarm.

Wherever the doctrine of infallibility has been given time to work out its legitimate results it has brought moral decay and spiritual death; it has alienated from the church many of her brightest minds; it has been the enemy of progress; and has introduced the spirit of division and of bitterness among the followers of Jesus. No wonder the greatest living church historian should have said that no remnant of Romanism has so hindered the growth of Protestantism as has this superstition of an infallible Bible.

What now are the gains that have come from this changed view of the Bible? I must not take the time to do more than enumerate without discussion certain of the gains that seem to me most important:

First.—The changed view of the Bible has set us free from the long, bitter and terribly costly controversies in which the disciples of Jesus were set over against every advance in scientific knowledge, and in which Christian people were led to defend the most unquestioned iniquities by the quoting of proof texts. It is no longer necessary to defend the indefensible. If a psalmist in an outburst of hatred and the spirit of revenge shall say, "Happy shall he be that taketh their little ones and dasheth their heads against the stones," we are not called upon to justify him. Such words cannot possibly be justified. It was the old conception of the Bible which gave to Tom Paine and Bradlaugh and Ingersoll their opportunity to caricature the religion of Jesus.

Second.—The changed view of the Bible has given us a Bible which can be used in harmony with the principles of Protestantism. Protestantism does not mean the transfer of authority from an infallible church to an infallible Book. It means a profound faith in the principle of freedom, and the true Protestant believes that religious progress can come only through freedom. The Protestant Bible cannot be withheld from the most searching and thoughtful investigation of its contents.

Third.—The changed view of the Bible has broken down the blind literalism on which denominationalism has been based and is making possible the reunion of Christendom. The spirit of unity cannot work save with the spirit of freedom, and it was not possible to move toward the unity for which Christ prayed until the conception which was responsible for breaking Protestantism into fragments was itself destroyed.

Fourth.—We have once more a Bible that throbs with human life and therefore meets human need. Not until God reveals Himself through the human life can we really understand Him.

Fifth.—Finally it has brought us again to the knowledge of the Living God, who is our Father, who revealed Himself to David and Isaiah, who made Himself known to Paul and John, and who will speak to us if we have ears to hear.

We need this book. Oh, read again the matchless stories of Hebrew heroism until you hear for yourself the whisper of the Eternal Power and Glory. Read the story of the dear Master until He shall draw you after Him in the steps of His most holy life.

CHRIST FROM THE MODERN POINT OF VIEW.

Albert W. Palmer, Pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, Oakland.

I remember reading as a boy a little book which told of a preacher who noticed in his congregation one Sunday a man of peculiar winsomeness and responsiveness so that he felt himself inspired by the stranger's presence to change his sermon here and there, making it more simple, more deeply spiritual; and after all the congregation had gone out and he found himself alone with the man, lo, the man was Jesus! I would speak tonight and would have you listen as though Jesus Himself sat here listening. I would not enter into any controversy about Jesus. I only desire, as effectively as I may, to bear witness to what I find in Him.

What I have to say is intensely personal. I am a Congregationalist, but this is no authoritative pronouncement of Congregational views, for in the nature of the case each Congregational minister is independent and can speak only for himself. I am a graduate of the University of California and of Yale Divinity School, but what I say is no mere parrot-like repetition of the teaching of any school. It is rather an attempt to set forth a personal answer to this question: What may Jesus mean to a man who was reared in a Christian home, who has spent seven years in study at two typical modern universities and who has lived eagerly and sympathetically in the full current of modern civic life for ten years more.

To begin with I think it is beyond question that the distinguishing characteristic of the modern point of view in everything is the use of the inductive method. That man is a medievalist who starts with a dogma and marshalls arguments in its support. The dogma may be true, the arguments may be valid, but the method is medieval. That man is a modernist who starts with the facts, sits down humbly before them and seeks to understand them, and is willing to follow where the facts lead regardless of all dogmas, prejudices, or preconceived ideas. For men trained in the scientific atmosphere of modern life, the most helpful approach to Christ will be the approach, not by way of dogma, but along the line of the inductive method. And surely he who said to Nathaniel, "Come and see," will welcome our approach to him in this spirit of scientific humility.

1. As I have reconstructed for myself during the last seventeen years the meaning of Christ I therefore begin here: Whatever else Jesus was or was not he was certainly a man. The record of the gospels as I read them reveals to me a genuine human being. He lived and felt as a man. He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. He faced temptation. He often sat wearied by the well-curb of life. He knew defeat and failure. He longed for human companionship and he also sought for divine companionship in prayer. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He cried out on the cross in anguish of body and of spirit.

To realize the genuine humanity of Jesus, is a great gain. As a boy in Sunday School I did not get this conception of him. The Christ presented to me then was not a man. He was only masquerading as a man. In reality he was a su-

pernatural being with unlimited knowledge and power who was rather thinly disguised in garments of humanity. He was really a being apart from me or my possible experience. Now all this is changed and Jesus has for me a greater reality and a higher personal value because I believe firmly in the genuineness of his humanity. It puts new power into texts like, "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth;" and "Being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death"; and, "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you."

2 But Jesus was no ordinary man. There are certain facts about him which have, it seems to me, tremendous significance. First of all is this. Not only was he recognized as a great teacher in his own day, but since his day it has developed that he is indeed the supreme teacher of humanity in matters of conduct and religion. His ethical standards have conquered the world—not yet in actual attainment, sad to say—but as unchallenged expressions of the ideal. Men who profess no religious faith, men bitterly opposed to organized religion, yet find in him the world's supreme teacher of ethics.

3. But you cannot detach the teacher from the man himself. Jesus gave to the world not only its supreme teaching, but its supreme example of the incorporation of the teaching into daily life. He lived his message. So far as we can see he bears no shadow upon his character. There is no stain upon his garments. Nor is this external only. It seems to be an inner fact, for nowhere does he betray consciousness of sin. He stands as the world's sinless, unstained human life. You probably remember how Sidney Lanier in his poem "The Crystal" reviews all the great figures of history, finding in each much inspiration, but also in each some limitation, until at last he comes to Christ when he bursts forth in these great words:

"But Thee, but Thee, O sovereign Seer of time,
But Thee, O poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,
But Thee, O man's best man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King or Priest,—
What "if" or "yet', what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Or inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's or death's—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?"

4. No man can contemplate the fact of Christ without being struck by the tremendous influence which He has wielded in the world. His line is gone out throughout all the earth. He wrote no books, yet thousands of books owe to him their inspiration. He painted no pictures, yet the whole world of painting, sculpture, music, even architecture has been changed by him. He held no official position, yet his influence has changed and is today more vitality than ever changing the whole social order, reproving greed and inhumanity and calling men to social brotherhood and human service.

Nor is this influence a mere vague, persuasive indefinite something, it is very intimate and personal. Thousands of men and women through the centuries rise up to make confession that He has been the dominant power within their lives, that they are what they are because of his presence. Here is something deeper than the influence of his teaching or his example. It is more like the influence of a mother over her son, to use a splendid illustration which has only recently come to my attention from the paper of a theological student. The mother instructs her boy on points of honor and morality. She tells him the perils of dishonesty and the tragedy of unchastity. In time the boy finds himself away from home in a great city. In his poverty and loneliness temptation comes to him. What is it saves him? His mother's sound advice? Not that alone. Her beautiful and pure life? Not even that alone. It is the feeling of personal love and responsibility which he has toward her which makes her advice and example dynamic in his life. He does not want to be unworthy of her love and trust. It has been even so with Christ down through the ages. He has been the great redemptive personality of the world. Men have been saved, not by the cold word of his teaching, not by the distant spectacle of his example, but by warm personal love and loyalty to Him.

There is a great scene in "The Piper" by Josephine Preston Peabody in which the Piper argues with "the lonely man," the Christ on the cross of the wayside shrine. The Piper pleads to be allowed to keep for his very own the children of Hamelin Town, but at last he cannot; he surrenders his will to Christ's. Just outside of Trinity Church, Boston, there stands a statue of Phillip Brooks, erect, manly, joyous, preaching with radiant power. But behind him stands the veiled figure of the Christ who reaches one hand forward resting it as in benediction on the shoulder of the great preacher. These things are but typical of human experience with Christ. His personal influence, his redemptive power have been simply tremendous in the world, and never more so than at this very hour.

5. One fact more about Christ must not be omitted. He has become for the world its noblest picture of God. How he has illuminated our conception of God! 'Who is God?" we ask, and we hear his words: "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." "But where is God?" we ask. "Here," says Jesus, "here in the rain which he causes to fall on the just and the unjust, here in the sparrows not one of whom falls without His notice, here in the lillies of the field which are clothed by His love and wisdom." "But what is God's attitude toward men" we ask. And his words are like music in our ears as he tells us the parable of the Prodigal son—"God is like that," he says; "God is a loving Father, when ye pray say: 'Our Father.' "But we crave far more"; our hearts cry out, "Show us the Father"; and his answer peals forth, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

And, explain it as you will, this has actually come to pass. Jesus has become for the world its picture of God. "After Jesus it is his religion or no religion," says a great German scholar. The fact is that the world today thinks of God in terms of Jesus Christ. God cannot be less than Jesus; he must be like Jesus, and more. Our God is an infinite Christ.

Behind all this there lies the marvelous self-consciousness of Jesus. He had a realization of his relationship with God and the overflowing power which resulted from it is central in his life. Upon the lips of what other character in history can you put such words as these: "I am the light of the world." "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are weary laden and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall

find rest unto your souls?" Yet these words do not sound immodest or presumptuous on the lips of Jesus; they simply express the experience of humanity with him.

What shall we say concerning such a life as this? What answer shall we make to such a remarkable and cumulative series of facts? How shall we classify such a personality? What else can we say than that he was divine, that in Jesus God revealed Himself in terms of humanity, that he is the supreme expression in human form of the life and character of God. "God was in him reconciling the world unto Himself." "And so the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth and we behold His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

But along with this sense of the divinity of Christ there goes a great inspiration, a vision which may well make us all pause and tremble. Divinity is not something apart from humanity; the Divine life which dwelt in Jesus in all its fulness, dwells also in you and me. Our lives too are a part of the life of God. That electric current which in Jesus became incandescent, also thrills through us. He was given to us to show us what a Divine Humanity might be. We are to attain "unto the fulness of the stature of Christ." He is at last to be "The first born among many brethren." What Jesus is, humanity shall at last become!

You have noticed doubtless that I have said nothing about the Virgin Birth. There is very little that needs to be said. It has no bearing on my faith in the divinity of Christ. He was divine because of his character, his personality, not because of the origin of his physical body. Did he have two human parents? Did he have only one? Settle it for yourself according to the evidence. It is purely a historical question and has no bearing on the authority of Jesus. You might be able to prove beyond possibility of questioning that he was born without any human parents at all and yet we would not worship him unless he had also been all that he was in his character and teaching. You may decide that the evidence for the virgin birth is so slender that it is imperative for you to think of Jesus as born like all the rest of us, of two human parents. Personally, I should welcome that conclusion, for it would only the more definitely make his Divinity a moral and spiritual thing. It would only make the fact of the incarnation more genuine and thoroughgoing. It would bring him closer to our common humanity in his origin, and therefore make the possibility of following him up the heights all the stronger. But at the same time it seems only reasonable to feel that so remarkable a life may well have come into the world in a remarkable way, and I believe that in the annunciation we have an echo of a wonderful spiritual experience which came to Mary and which ought to become the experience of every mother—"For lo the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." When we look at things with clear eyes we shall see that a birth by two parents is just as miraculous, involves the presence and power of God just as truly, as would a birth by only one human parent. The world can easily afford to dispense with the idea that Jesus had a physical birth different from ours, if in return it can gain potentially for every mother the experience of Mary of the nearness and presence of God in the gret miracle of bringing a new life and personality into the world.

You have also doubtless noticed that I have said nothing about the miracles of Jesus. This has been a deliberate omission because I do not regard them as primary evidence for his divinity. I believe that unusual events, which we call miracles, accompanied the life of Jesus. Given so remarkable a personality, the miracles become only the inevitable overflow of its influence in the world. A little boy learns to play a violin,—becomes proficient enough to play let us say Handel's "Largo" with fair accuracy. The time is correct, the notes are true. We compliment the performance. But let a great master of the violin appear. Let Kubelik or Ysaye play Handel's "Largo." What happens? "Tears are in our eyes and in our ears the murmur of a thousand years!" We see a great river rolling to the sea, we feel anew the nobility of life, our experience is one of spiritual renewal and we come back to the concert hall when the last note dies away as those who have returned from a far country. Our ordinary human lives are like a little boy playing his violin. The results are very modest and limited. But Jesus was a master of life. From him no such meager results could possibly be expected. The miracles are exactly what we should expect.

But while I believe the miracles, I do not base my faith in the divinity of Christ upon them. His power to achieve results beyond ordinary human experience does not guarantee his divinity, for if he had worked miracles ten times greater than any recorded in the New Testament, and if he had not been at the same time a good man, we would not build churches in his name or worship him today! It is not power that commands the allegiance of thoughtful men, it is the moral and spiritual principles which direct the use of whatever measure of power may be given.

One miracle, however, deserves special mention—the resurrection. In some way after the death on Calvary Jesus came back to his disciples, scattered, discouraged, beaten; and he convinced them that he was not holden of death but was still alive. The accounts of the resurrection are not clear or harmonious. Some of them emphasize a reanimation of his physical body, yet he did not resume the old physical life. Through the stories runs another tendency which has always appealed to me more strongly than the emphasis on his physical body. It is the emphasis on his spiritual presence. Mary suddenly finds him with her in the garden, the two on the Emmaus road find themselves not alone, but walking with him. Paul meets him on the desert road leading to Damascus. This experience with Jesus was the most conspicuous element in very early Christian preaching. Explain the resurrection how you will, the fact remains that the supreme effect that Jesus had upon his disciples was to convince them that he had risen from the dead and was alive again forever more.

One other important subject, inseparably connected with our thought of Christ, has been deliberately left unto the last—the atonement. Why did Jesus die upon the cross? Various answers have been given at different times in the history of the church. The earliest disciples simply pointed to the great fifty-third chapter of Isaiah with its picture of the suffering servant of Jehovah and said that Jesus died in fulfillment of prophecy. Later other explanations arose: that he died to pay humanity's debt to God incurred by Adam's sin, that he died to satisfy the divine justice by receiving on himself the punishment due the sin of the world. God, having received payment, having exacted justice, was then in a position to forgive men; and reconciliation between God and man became possible.

None of these theories appeal to the modern point of view. They are too legalistic. They seem to concern God

who is an immense Shylock or an implacable judge interested in abstract laws, rather than God the Father of his children as revealed by Jesus. What then? Shall we take the cross from off our churches and cease to sing—

"In the Cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time?"

Not so! Such a sacrifice would be as pathetic as it is needless.

Behind every great doctrine of the past, however crudely or even repulsively stated, there lurks a great idea, a truth dear and necessary to humanity. The atonement is true, it only requires a modern interpretation to release once more in the world the tremendous power which it holds. What is that interpretation? Something like this: Jesus' death on the cross is not an isolated event, it is only the symbolic and supreme expression of the ever present and dominant spirit of his life—the service for humanity in a spirit of absolute love and self-sacrifice. That spirit came to its final dramatic climax in laying down his own life. That act, and all that lies behind it in the years of patient self-giving in Galilean villages and on the streets of Jerusalem, does effect a reconciliation between man and God. But how? By changing the mind of God? Not in the least! God's mind did not need to be changed. He has always loved and sought his wandering children. How then? By changing our mind. Jesus died not to make God good but to make us good!

But, someone asks, how does the spectacle of Jesus' life of self-sacrifice culminating on Calvary make us good? Only by touching our lives with a divine purpose to live in the same spirit of self-sacrifice and join Jesus in his search for and service to God's lost children. The world is not to be saved by Jesus alone, not by his three hours' agony on the cross merely, but by the thousands of men and women who themselves become saviors and give themselves unselfishly even as did he. This young medical student in London is to hear the call of the deep-sea fishermen, and give his life to the people on the coast of Labrador This young woman is to respond to the need of the great city, and spend her life in the nineteenth ward in Chicago as a friend and helper of the foreigner and the forgotten. This young Scotch weaver is to die on his knees in the little African village, that slavery may cease and brotherhood be born. Thousands of nameless and humble souls shall in the Spirit of the Cross give themselves not to selfish ends but to unselfish service in cottages and hospitals and workshops. And so Christ shall be reduplicated in a myriad of saviors and the world be reconciled to the God who is a God of love. Thus the atonement, the at-one-ment, is continually and eternally in process.

All this ought to make it quite clear to us what Essential Christianity consists of. It is not a matter of theories about the person of Jesus, or speculations as to the mystery of the relation of his soul to the all-enfolding life of God. Speculation is interesting and has its place. But a man is not made a Christian by coming to any particular intellectual convictions as to the nature of Christ. Christianity is rather a matter of personal devotion and loyalty to Christ and his interpretation of life and duty. If only one is sincere in his love for Jesus and his desire to reproduce his life in the world, we need not fear that such a one will hold unworthy views of his Lord. Continued experience with Christ will lead him to proufounder insight and greater reverence.

'If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to him
And to him will I cleave alway."

You may begin there! But to love and serve and follow Christ will, I believe, inevitably lead you on to the second stanza of the poem:

'If Jesus Christ is a God—
And the only God—I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell
The earth, the sea and the air!"

THE SCOTTISH RITE AUDITORIUM MEETING.

An editorial in The Pacific this week remarks on the significance of this meeting and comments briefly on the views presented there. It will be of interest to our readers to know who was on the platform at that time in addition to the speakers and the chairman. The men who were there at that time on the platform and thus declared themselves, in accordance with the statement in our editorial, as at least favoring freedom of thought and expression, and as believing that no essential truth was endangered were: The Rev. J. B. Orr, moderator of the Northern California Congregational Conference and pastor in Oakland; Rev. L. D. Rathbone, superintendent of the conference; John Wright Buckham, professor of systematic theology, Pacific Theological Seminary; G. W. Hinman, Pacific Coast secretary of the American Missionary Association; Rev. W. W. Willard, pastor of the Congregational Church at San Jose; Rev. Roy Campbell, pastor at Palo Alto; Rev. F. V. Jones, pastor at Lodi; the Revs. Tuttle, Snider, Avery, Hart and Charnock, San Francisco pastors; Rev. E. L. Mears, pastor First Church, Alameda; the Revs. S. C. Patterson and G. D. Yoakum,Berkeley pastors; Rev. E. E. Youtz of Pilgrim Church, Oakland; Professors Bade and Parsons of Pacific Theological Seminary—the last named, a Baptist; Rev. R. F. Carter, acting pastor First Congregtional Church, Oakland; the Rev. O. W. Lucas of Berkeley, Rev. G. H. Dekay of Berkeley, who is for a few months supplying at Martinez; the Rev. Mr. Davis, now supplying Park Church, San Francisco; W. W. Ferrier, Editor of The Pacific; W. C. Pond, our veteran worker—now, as for many years, working devotedly to win the Chinese and Japanese for Christ.

The opening prayer was by the Rev. Dr. Pond; the closing prayer and benediction by the Rev. J. B. Orr.

Just before the benediction Dr. Aked said: "This has been a wonderful meeting. The philosophy of Dr. Nash, the scholarship of Dr. Brooks, the humanity of Mr. Palmer, the candor and spirituality of all, have made these speeches memorable. The presence on the platform of so many professors and pastors is a demonstration of good feeling beyond all praise. That feeling is represented in a single phrase used by dear old Dr. Pond. When I wrote him inviting him to the meeting, he replied accepting, and signed the letter, 'Yours for free thought, free speech, and Christian brotherhood.' In that spirit we have met. In that spirit we will part."

Little account of this meeting was given in the daily papers. In the Chronicle, the report was a gross caricature; almost the only feature set forth being one which it could burlesque. The Chronicle stated also that there were only about 500 persons in attendance; the estimates of fair-minded persons, among them the manager of the auditorium, vary from 1250 to 1400. We are confident that an actual count would have given not less than 1250,

two and a half times the number reported by The Chronicle. The Pacific could say much more which would show what sort of treatment Congregationalists have been receiving of late from The Chronicle. This will suffice for the present and will put readers on guard, so that they will interpret aright whatever they see in its columns with reference to any matter growing out of Dr. Aked's much discussed sermon. Offended reporters, unable to see that no man can take out a few sentences here and there from a sermon or address and be fair to it and the speaker, have been on the warpath ever since misrepresentation was charged. We do not mean to say that misrepresentation was intended originally. We do not know. But it looks very much as if later it has been intentional. This, not only from things printed, but from the words of some of the reporters.

Just what knowledge the managing editor of The Chronicle has of these reportorial operations we do not know now, but hope to know ere long.

It is strange indeed that a paper that burlesqued such a meeting as Congregationalists held last Thursday evening, and which was attended by men and women of all denominations, should give on Tuesday of this week a whole column to a report of another meeting in which attempt was made to refute some of Dr. Aked's statements.

The time has come to say to The Chronicle that it cannot go on knocking Dr. Aked without knocking Congregationalists in general. If such is to be San Francisco journalism, so far as The Chronicle is concerned, we want to know it.

As to the fear that has come upon certain San Francisco daily papers that they will lose greatly in circulation if doctrines not acceptable to Roman Catholics are set forth—that is another matter. To what extent these fears are to shape the policy of the papers only their owners can have anything to say. But as to correct reporting and fair-play and decency in journalism the public has a right to speak.

THE ATTITUDE OF GREAT THEOLOGIANS TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

A few weeks ago The Pacific gave quotations from the writings of the Rev. Dr. James Denney, professor of New Testament Literature in the United Free Church College of Glasgow, Scotland, which showed incontrovertibly that Dr. Denney did not regard belief in the doctrine of the virgin birth as an essential article of Christian faith. Dr. Denney's words in part were: "We cannot go wrong if we limit the fundamental confession of faith to the character in which Jesus presented himself, and was afterward presented to the world, without introducing into it as essential conditions or presuppositions of faith matters of fact whch originally had no such significance!

Dr. Denney says further: "The question which Jesus asks, and which is of vital importance, is, Who say ye that I am? Not, How think ye that I came to be? No doubt the two questions must be related somehow; but happily it is possible to answer the first by assuming the Christian attitude to Christ, while the other remains in abeyance."

Dr. Denney is regarded by his Presbyterian brethren everywhere as one of the most orthodox believers. The quotation is from his book, "Jesus and the Gospels."

Another thoroughly orthodox Presbyterian quoted was Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, professor of theology in New College, Edinburgh. His words, in part, were: "We dare not call virgin birth a **sine qua non** of Sonship. . . . Neither his sinlessness, nor his unique Sonship, requires the guarantee of virgin birth." This, we get from Dr. Mackintosh's book on "The Person of Jesus."

It will be of value at this time to our readers to know what the Rev. Dr. Sheldon, an eminent Methodist theologian and professor in the divinity school of Boston University, says on this subject in a recent book: "The supposition of the supernatural conception is in accord with the extraordinary personality and vocation of its subject. Doubtless it would be going too far to say that this supposition is theoretically indispensable. Of course, the maintenance of the divinity of Christ is not at all dependent upon it, since divinity proper is no subject for generation in time. Supernatural conception could have a bearing only upon the finite human factor in Christ. . .. We may properly hesitate to affirm an imperative dogmatic demand for the supernatural conception."

Here, then, is the declaration by eminent authorities that a man can be a Christian and not believe in the virgin birth.

To this position the whole Christian world will come ere long, we confidently believe.But this is not to say that belief in the virgin birth will be set aside generally. It may continue to hold the commanding place it does at present.

How easily my neighbor chants his creed,
Kneeling beside me in the House of God.
His "I believe" he chants; and "I believe,"
With cheerful iteration and consent—
Watching meantime the white slow sunbeam move
Across the aisle, or listening to the bird
Whose free wild song sounds through the open door.

Thou God supreme—I too, I too, believe!
But O, forgive, if this one human word,
Binding the deep and breathless thought of thee
And my own conscience with an iron band.
Stick in my throat. I cannot say it, thus—
This "I believe" that doth thyself obscure;
This rod to smite; this barrier; this blot
On thy most unimaginable face
And soul of majesty.

'Tis not man's faith
In thee that he proclaims in echoed phrase,
But faith in man; faith not in thine own Christ,
But in another man's dim thought of him.

—Richard Watson Gilder.

DOCTRINAL TROUBLES AMONG PRESBYTERIANS.

Our Presbyterian brethren are having some trouble among themselves of late, and it is evident that keeping the peace is not found to be an easy thing just now. The Continent, for example, takes the Herald and Presbyter to task as follows:

"If any non-reader of The Continent in your acquaintance has seen The Herald and Presbyter's comment on the article by Dr. William Adams Brown in a recent issue of this paper, make sure to show him the article itself as The Continent printed it. The contrast between Dr. Brown's actual utterances and The Herald and Presbyter's interpretation will help impartial men to comprehend better

how thoroughbred heresy-hunters can twist heresy out of the most devoted and unqualified declarations of faith in Christ. In this instance The Herald and Presbyter impliedly classes Dr. Brown among those 'who deny the supernatural and make human reason the supreme guide,' whereas the tenor of his whole article is precisely the opposite, as anybody who will read it may see for himself."

Dr. Brown is one of the faculty of Union Theological Seminary, an institution which has grieved the extremely conservative element in the Church; and which, withdrawing from denominational control, has been informed that it has done so without the consent of the Church. At the last general assembly a committee was appointed to make a thorough investigation of all the ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions in the relation of the seminary to the general assembly. The president and several of the professors have had the word heretic hurled at them for several years by the extreme conservative wing of the Presbyterian Church.

Another note indicating the condition in the Presbyterian ranks we find in the editorial columns of the Great Lakes Presbyterian. The paper remarks:

"It is not a question at the present time whether two decidedly different views of Christian truth exist in the Presbyterian Church, and in fact in every part of the Christian Church, Protestant and Romanist, but whether the two elements have enough in common to work side by side under the same flag, that flag being the banner of the cross."

It is said further: "When a Presbyterian minister deliberately and proudly declares in a great union gathering that he has so much in common with Unitarianism, and when from the Atlantic to the Pacific, if not from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, Presbyterian ministers go out of their way even to declare that the Confession of Faith of Presbyterianism means simply nothing to them but a form of words that had its use possibly for a former generation, but has no meaning for them, it is quite natural that more conservative Presbyterians should express their surprise, if nothing else, at such extreme sentiments. That in some cities a few representatives of Presbyterianism are willing on such an occasion as Thanksgiving service to occupy the same platform with Jews, Unitarians, Universalists and Swedenborgians may not mean so much, for to them probably Thanksgiving is more of a national than a religious anniversary. But these are signs of the times. Whether we shall regard them as portentous of greater union in the days to come, or of new divisions, is an open question. We all need to express considerably less than we think, in discussing this question. It is a time for very much prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, something in which we can all agree."

It is not very long ago that we saw in the editorial columns of The Presbyterian, a Philadelphia publication, the statement that the Presbyterian Church was honeycombed with Universalism, and great lamentation over the fact and an evident determination on the part of that paper to root it out.

To what extent the doctrine of universal salvation has invaded the Presbyterian Church, we do not know. We have among our acquaintances some members of that church who firmly believe it; and others, who, while not dogmatizing thereon, are much more inclined to that than to belief in either conditional immortality or eternal punishment.

These are among the laity, from whom subscription to the Westminster confession is not required, as it is in the case of ministers.

Among the Churches.

Brea.—For the past two Sundays the church at Brea has been supplied by Rev. N. L. Rowell, D.D.

San Francisco, Chinese.—The Chinese Church in this city received twenty-one young people to membership by confession and baptism last Sunday evening. Two of these were young married ladies. Two others were students from China pursuing post-graduate couses in our University.

Los Angeles, Berean.—Responding to the call of this church, a number of ministers and delegates assembled on Tuesday, March 17, to act as a Council to examine, and, if expedient, ordain Mr. G. C. Love to the ministry. However, there was not a quorum present of the churches invited, and so no action could be taken. It was, however, voted, by the individuals present, to ask the Committee on Licensure of the Association to present his name at the forthcoming meeting in San Diego for licensure for one year.

Niland.—The latest boom town in Southern California is Niland, which has been known until recently as Imperial Junction, and previous to that as Old Beach. A new high line irrigation canal has been completed, bringing into possible cultivation a large amount of land which heretofore has been mere desert. The townsite is now on the market, and if the newspaper reports are correct, a large number of lots have already been sold. The chances are that here will be a town which will have as spectacular a development as any of the other Imperial Valley places. Superintendent Larkin has secured for us, in conjunction with the Presbyterians, a lot large enough for a church and parsonage. Just what the plan of federation is to be has not been decided.

Ocean Beach.—Rev. W. A. Waterman has concluded his labors in planting a union Congregational Church at Ocean Beach; a commodious house of worship has been completed with but $250 aid from our Building Society and no indebtedness exists for either building or salary. The membership enrolled now numbers 35. Only 5 members were originally Congregationalists while but two of these were charter members. Unionism pervades the kingdom of God as well as the kingdom of this world. A woman's guild was organized by Mrs. Waterman, with an enrollment of 35, and has rendered valuable assistance in the purchase of lots and equipment of the church. The Sunday-school is prosperous and led by Miss Rosa Bouton, a most efficient leader and laborer in every department, formerly of Lincoln, Neb. Beginning with a handful of boys in the parsonage, a club of 16 was organized on entering the new church, chaplained by A. C. Shepard, and is a fine body of youngsters. The ocean waves echo back

the gleesome voices as they ring out, "What's the matter with Dr. Waterman?" He's all right." Rev. M. A. Martin, from Demarest, Ga., has taken up the work as pastor, and being accustomed to the Coast work, will no doubt carry forward this new and much needed church to still greater success in the extension of the Kingdom and uplift of society. This is the second church Dr. Waterman has organized on the Coast frontier. He will spend the summer east, after the G. A. R. encampment at San Diego.

NOTES AND PERSONALS.

Next Monday the address at the meeting of the Congregational ministers of San Francisco and vicinity will be given by the Rev. Dr. Barton, secretary of the American Board.

The Congregational Club of San Francisco and vicinity will meet in the First Congregational Church of Oakland next Monday evening at 6 o'clock. Dinner at 6:30 for one dollar a plate. There will be addresses by the Rev. Dr. Walter Frear and by Dr. J. C. Barton of the American Board.

The Pacific was in error last week in announcing that the church at Petaluma had extended a call to the Rev. W. O. Wark. The call was about to be given, but just before the vote was taken word was received from Mr. Wark that latest advice from his family physician was that he should wait one year more before re-entering the work of the ministry.

Last Sunday's calendar of the First Congregational Church of Santa Cruz contained the following note in which many readers of The Pacific will be interested: "The carrying of the school bonds is of special interest to this church when we realize that in our membership is the City Superintendent of Schools, one of the five directors, 27 teachers, besides 6 teachers who are members of the congregation but not of the Church, and at least 20 ex-teachers in the congregation, making a total of at least 53 experienced teachers in the congregation. Of the total number above mentioned, 21 are now connected with the schools of Santa Cruz. The pastor of this church believes that the public schools are the greatest socializing and Christianizing factors that the Church can work through or that the Church has ever been responsible for ever bringing into existence."

DR. VAN HORN'S LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE.

In reply to a letter from Mr. C. Z. Merritt, chairman of the pastoral committee of the First Congregational Church of Oakland, notifying him of the call extended to him by the Church, Dr. Van Horn wrote:

"I am in receipt of your letter of March 8th, apprising me of the report of your Committee and of the vote of the church upon it, constituting a formal call to the pastorate.

"The exceedingly commendatory tone of your report lays upon me an added burden of humility and responsibility. While the large and hearty vote of the church adds a confirming note of confidence and expectancy which is no small guaranty of success.

"Consicous of many short-comings, yet persuaded that your call is the expression of God's will I accept as a sacred trust the privilege of the leadership of this historic church, confident that the glorious past must fulfill itself in a yet more splendid future; and I hope to be with you for the first time as your pastor on the first Sunday of May.

"Trusting supremely in a Divine Guidance as we enter this new relationship, and under God a new era, I must greatly trust also in the people of the First Church. A man may sometimes draw a congregation, but no one man ever made a church; it must grow through a life within. Together then we must live our common life in the spirit, face our future, our problems, our tasks, our privileges.

"May God give us great joy together in finding His will and building His Kingdom in these days that call for every man's best! I promise you my best."

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